METHODS AND PROCEDURES OF OFFICE MANAGEMENT

Management can be defined as working with and through individuals and groups to accomplish organizational goals.

Office management is that part of management concerned with the facilities of an office, their arrangement and the people at work, their communication pattern, decision making process etc. for achieving organizational goal. The main purposes of office management are:

- ✓ Allocation of resources among the staff members
- ✓ Maximize the utilization of resources
- ✓ Simplify the decision making process
- ✓ Proper flow of information

Skills of a Manager

It is generally agreed that there are at least three areas of skill necessary for carrying out the process of office management: technical, human, and conceptual.

Technical Skill: Ability to use knowledge, methods, techniques, and equipment necessary for the performance of specific tasks acquired from experience, education and training.

Human Skill: Ability to understand the complexities of the overall organization and where one's own operation fits into the organization. This knowledge permits one to act according to the objectives of the total organization rather than only on the basis of the goal's and needs of one's own immediate group. The approximate mix of these skills varies as an individual advance in management from provisory to top management positions.

Conceptual Skill: This relates to the understanding of the basic intention of establishing the organization itself and the methods and procedures of realizing the predetermined objectives in an efficient manner. To be effective, less technical skill tends to be needed as one advances from lower to higher levels in the organization but more and more conceptual-skill is necessary. Supervisors at lower levels needs considerable technical skill because they are often required to train and develop techniques and other employees in their sections. On the other hand, executives in business organization do not need to know how to perform the entire specific tasks at the operational level. However, they should be able to see how all these functions arc interrelated in accomplishing the goals of the entire organization.

Amount of technical and conceptual skills needed at different levels of management usually arises inversely. However, the common denominator that appears to be crucial at all levels is human skill.

Records

Records are the basic things for the smooth functioning and continuation of an office. Their maintenance and ready exposure to use at the time of requirement are, therefore, primary concern for those who remain responsible for office management. A record generally refers to documents that contain useful information. They are essential for correct and appropriate decision making endeavors with regards to:

- i) Stepping into new thing
- ii) Go for action on a matter decided earlier

iii) Fixing up responsibility or/and holding accountable for implementation of decisions
iv) Use, as future references, and
v) Damaging paper whenever necessary.

The major purpose of maintaining records is to communicate information at requirement. Some records may not have current use but involves immense importance for future reference. Documents that do not bear either of these characters need not be considered as records for maintaining those longer periods. It is better to dispose of those papers as soon as possible.

Government documents have special importance from their security point of view. It essentially means the security of the information, disclosure of that to an unauthorized individual may be hazardous to the national security. To avoid mishandling and wrong treatment of government documents there arc provisions for grading or classifications. These ensure uniform treatment of specific documents at all stages. Depending on the extent of risks involved and the degree of protection required, the government documents have been classified into the following 4 types.

i. **Top Secret document:** Contains information and materials, the security aspect of which is paramount and whose unauthorized disclosure would cause exceptionally great damage to the nation.
ii. **Secret document:** Contains information and materials, whose unauthorized disclosure would endanger national security, cause serious injury to interest or prestige of the nation or any governmental activity or would be of great advantage to a foreign nation.
iii. **Confidential document:** Contains information and materials, the unauthorized disclosure of which, while not endangering national security, would be prejudicial to the interest or prestige of the nation, to any government activity or individual or would be of advantage to a foreign power.
iv. **Restricted document:** Contains information and materials, which should not be published or communicated in any one except for official use.

Principles of Grading
In classifying/grading documents the following principles should be observed:

a) Each document has to be graded on its sensitivity i.e. according to the nature, source and implication or the information contained therein. Merit of a document is nothing but assessment of its sensitivity.
b) The main document inside a file must not bear a lower classification than the highest classifications of any of its appendices.
c) A document referring to or quoting from a classified document need not be given the same classification, unless such reference or quotation itself justifies that classification.
d) A file containing classified document is graded according to the highest classification of any document contained in it.

Security of a document is threatened due to:
a) Lack of knowledge about a security rules and regulations,
b) Lack of appreciation of such rules and instructions,
c) Unauthorized disclosure of information by knowledge people, and

d) Surreptitious access by spies.

Classification of Records
For the purpose of preservation, records will be classified into the following categories:

Category A: This category includes important records of permanent values, such as:
  i.   Files containing orders establishing important matters of policy, legislation, rules and regulations.
  ii. Files containing orders establishing important precedents which are required for reference over a long period.
  iii. Files relating to persons whose importance warrants retention of their cases permanently; and
  iv. State documents such as treaties and agreements with foreign countries.

Category B: This category includes records which are semi-permanent in nature and to be retained for a period of ten or more years depending upon the extent of their utility. Service records of govt. servants, for example will be classified under this category. These files will be recorded and indexed and retained in the office for three years and then sent to the record room.

Category C: This category includes the ordinary records, which are to be retained for three to five years. These files will be retained in the office for specific periods and will be destroyed thereafter.

Category D: This category includes papers of routine or ephemeral nature, which are to be retained one year only. These files will be destroyed after one year.

Filling Procedure
The office assistant must enlist the daily receipts and issues consecutively in the receipt and issue register, respectively. He will then open a new file if necessary on the basis of a fresh receipt or a note. He will give a file number to the new file and enter it in the file register. He will write a page number in pencil on the top right hand corner of each page.

A heading or title to be given in each title to be given in each file with identification member.

When a letter is to be issued, the Office Assistant will make necessary entries in the Issue Register and note the issue number on the draft and the fair copy. The dispatcher of the Receipt and Issue unit will maintain an account of the postage stamps used for sending the letter by post in the Stamp Account Register.

The procedure of file indexing may be done in the following ways:
        1. Alphabetic classification
        2. Numerical classification
        3. Geographical classification
        4. Subjective classification
Subjective classification of the indexing is practiced in our country and the remaining others are used in other countries.

Basic Principles of Official Correspondence
In order to write an effective letter, one should follow the following general principles:

1. **Clarity:** The letter should be written in such a way that the reader can easily understand the message of the writer. An ambiguous letter creates confusion only.
2. **Brevity:** The letter should be as short as possible without affecting the clarity. A short letter with appropriate wording enhances gravity of the message.
3. **Objectivity:** The language used in the letter should be such that the reader derives the same meaning as intended by the writer.
4. **Simplicity:** The words used and style of writing followed should be such that the reader does not face difficulty in understanding.
5. **Timeliness:** Letter is written for the purpose of some action. If it is not written timely, the purpose cannot be served. It is rather better not to write any letter at all than to write after appropriate time.

Basic Structure of Official Letters

Before we pass on to the forms of official letter, it is pertinent to say a few words about the structure of the letter itself. Structurally, official letter may generally be divided into the following 5 parts:

a. **The Heading Section:** This section contains printed or type written letter head, return address and date line (sometimes official pad with telephone no. etc. is used).
b. **The Opening Section:** It contains (i) inside address, (ii) attention line, (iii) salutation.
c. **The Message Section:** It contains (i) subject line and (ii) body of the letter.
d. **The Closing Section:** This includes (i) complementary closing, (ii) signature with date, (iii) writers identification, (iv) enclosure notation, and (v) copy notation.
e. **Miscellaneous Parts:** These contain (i) previous reference (if any), (ii) registered, confidential, etc.

Human Relation

Another most important aspect of office management is to maintain human relations by management personnel.

A human relation is the art of accomplishing work with different category of people in an organization by emphasizing and understanding the needs and concerns of those people. It provides an environment that stimulates, motivates, and encourages the growth for all. In fact, the important function of human relations is expressed in the words **"HUMAN RELATIONS** itself. This may be as follows:

H = Have self-control
U = Understand from others viewpoints
M = Make others interest as your own
A = Admit it when you are wrong
N = Never criticize publicly
R = Reasons should be constructive
E = Explain precisely and to the point
L = lead but do not drive
A = Avoid quick judgments
T = Take care of little things
I =Inform others about the matter
0 = Offer helpful suggestions
N = Never forget to praise for a job well done
S = Stress the positive